I appreciate that the DoJ is seeking new comments on
the Microsoft antitrust situation. My insight and
comments as a customer and proponent for holding
Microsoft accountable are as follows:

Why does Microsoft build players, plug-ins, and
applications that work on HP Unix, but not on Linux?
Netscape and Real Networks build applications that run
on Unix, Linux, Windows, and NT, and they are
significantly less well "heeled" than Microsoft...

Why does Microsoft not support file systems of other
operating systems, such as Linux (ext2) or MacOS?
Linux supports Microsoft file systems, and the open
source movement has much less resources, funding, and
corporate backing than Microsoft...

Why is Linux the last Unix-based operating system
Microsoft targets for the few applications it decides
to port to other OSes, when Linux is the most widely
used of all Unix-based OSes? Netscape, Apple, and
Real Networks offer releases on all these operating
systems almost simultaneously...

Why do major vendors, such as Compaq, build their
hardware to work specifically with a certain version
of Windows, thus requiring a new PC purchase to obtain
the benefits of a new Windows version? I can install
all versions of Red Hat Linux on my Compaq laptop, but
the BIOS explicitly prevents my modem from working
with Windows 2000 (even though the PC is listed on the
2000 hardware compatibility list)...

Why do Windows operating systems not recognize
partitions dedicated to other (competing) operating
systems? Install Windows on a PC with Linux on it and
you will generally lose your boot sector pointer to
the Linux partition, while Linux during installation
will notice Windows operating systems on partitions
and seamlessly allow you to boot from and use those
other operating systems...

Why is it that Microsoft has so easily been successful
in preventing hardware vendors from openly supporting

other operating systems? Up until a few years ago,
you could not buy a Compaq or HP server or desktop
with Linux installed on it, due to the exclusive
license agreements they secured, and to this date most
companies have a robust Linux offering even though
it's generally well hidden within their site (in the
/linux directory, etc., with little or no associated
advertising or direct links to it from their main
page)...

Why is it that when you buy hard drives and other
peripherals, they explicitly say on the package that
Windows 98 (or other Microsoft OS) is REQUIRED, or
that it was "designed for" Windows? A hard drive is a
hard drive, and I have had no problems installing any
version of Red Hat Linux on any of these hardware
devices, with or without Windows installed...

Why is it that the direct experience of countless IT
shops (and off the record Oracle comments and
opinions) is that Oracle on a Linux server, other
hardware being equal, outperforms Oracle on NT/2000 by
orders of magnitude, and yet there have been no
industry efforts (especially by Oracle, who may be
getting their arm twisted) to prove it using any of
the many metrics they have for doing so? Instead,
they continue to compare Oracle on HP or Sun to Oracle
on NT/2000...

Why is it that Microsoft was successful in getting DoD
to modify (water down) their DII-COE standards to
allow NT to be certified, but there has been little or
no effort to provide the same level of certification
to Linux so they can get the all important "seal of
approval" to compete against Microsoft in one of the
most lucrative sectors of IT spending (the US
government)? The Air Force has done studies proving
that DII-COE compliance would be straightforward for
Linux, but nobody is leading the charge to make it
happen, so Microsoft maintains their stranglehold on
the market...

Why is it that Microsoft is once again allowed to
"embrace and extend (choke to death)" evolving
standards, such as the Sharable Content Object
Reference Model (SCORM) being pursued by the DoD? The
SCORM standard is inherently non-OS and non-browser
dependent, but along comes a well-heeled Microsoft-led
consortium to develop a competing standard "CLEO"

that, surpisingly enough, ONLY WORKS WITH MICROSOFT
INTERNET EXPLORER!!!...

The stranglehold Microsoft has on the market has
resulted in some of the worst dichotomies of our
times. The DoD loses hundreds of millions, possibly
billions of dollars per year, due to down time and
cleanup of Internet Explorer and Outlook related
viruses that proliferate due to the widely known poor
security models of Microsoft products designed to be
"user friendly" rather than secure. However, DoD
continues to use both widely, rather than the much
more secure and relatively trouble-free Netscape
products. They have this stranglehold because the DoJ
has been incapable, and recently unwilling (since the
election and rise to power of our business-friendly
Republican government), to hold Microsoft accountable.
 Everyone in the marketplace knows Microsoft dearly
deserves to have their ears slapped back some, and
that in the long run the market will be much better
off for it, despite any near-term impacts. Based on
his direct quotes in the trades, and the fact that he
brought forth a class action lawsuit, the Compaq CEO
was clearly livid about the way his company was being
manipulated in the early 90's by Microsoft, but his
memory became extremely fuzzy on the issue during the
trial--amazing how that can happen after you realize a
few years later that being "in bed" with Microsoft is
not exactly a bad thing for your company, its stock
price, your stock options, etc. However, the
lucrative nature of these relationships, and the
ensuing unwillingness of those bringing suit to hold
their course, should not prevent DoJ from attempting
to do the right thing and hold Microsoft accountable
for breaking the antitrust laws, where it can be
proven they clearly are doing so.

Thanks,
Duane Hellums
IT guru, writer, and independent consultant
MSIS, Hawaii Pacific University
Author, "Red Hat Linux Installation and Configuration
Handbook," "Frong Page Unleashed," and several
Microsoft competitive white papers
IT/IS Program Manager, Programmer, Network/System
Administrator, Computer Security Manager

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